

## PATENT-LAW REFORM.

In some past observations on the protection of new inventions from piracy, we took occasion to remark that the patent laws are virtually and really smothering in their birth the hopeless fruits of the poor man's ingenuity, and suppressing ultimately that very invention which a patent law, worthy of common sense, should cherish and extend. We are glad to perceive that the committee of members of the Society of Arts, to which we lately referred, direct particular attention to this very view of the operation of the present patent laws, the first and main point on which they "wish particularly to obtain information" being "the effect which the existing system of patents may have had in suppressing and thus depriving the public of the knowledge and use of inventions, by those who are unable to bear the heavy expenses required, under it." The committee, meantime, are about to consider the principles of jurisprudence which should regulate the recognition of the rights of inventors. A report on this subject will be referred by the council of the society to the committee, who, as already announced, have agreed to act in the promotion of "a legislative recognition of the rights of inventors by means of an easy registration of them in accordance with the principles agreed on by the council of the society in 1849." The report alluded to is not yet fully prepared, but we have reason to believe that it will go thoroughly into the subject, and advise a total overturn of the principles (if they can be called so) on which the present system is based. The right of the inventor to hold the fruits of his intellect and labour as his own property, subject, like all other property, to certain duties and conditions for the public good, will be insisted on, and ranked with the rights and duties of property in general, although not recommended to be given or held, like right to land, &c., in perpetuity. It is considered as an utter anomaly in law and equity that proprietors of inventions should be obliged to actually beg to be allowed to hold their own inventions to be their own property, and graciously to have granted them what, after all, is little more than a mere empty form of protection from plunder. In its preamble, the report will probably examine into the causes of the present unsatisfactory position of inventors, and the state of the present system of "jurisprudence" in invention; after which it will attempt to determine those principles which ought to regulate that jurisprudence. From the present state of things, it will endeavour to evolve what may be useful for future legislation. Justice will be done to the Registration Act as an irregular improvement in, or rather substitute for, the law as it stands, as "a small patent law" in short, as the public have not been slow in making it. Indeed, the principle to be recommended is simply an evolution of the Registration Act itself,—"an easy means of registering" the claims of inventors in general, which the law shall regard as valid until they are proved to be otherwise, as is the case already in almost every civilized country but our own. The establishment of any tribunal to investigate claims either before they are disputed or afterwards, is a separate and distinct question quite independent of the policy of recognizing the rights of inventors to the fruits of their labour. The report, however, will probably discuss that question also, arguing, so far as regards litigation, that as the thousands of registrations effected under the "Utility" Designs Act have not encouraged litigation, but have, on the contrary, generated a much-improved tone of morals amongst inventors, oppressed by the patent laws, who have taken refuge under this Act—often illegally, or under the pretence of registering mere "form or configuration," but almost uniformly with respect to even such illegal claims of registration,—it is at least doubtful, and remains to be seen, whether an extension of the Registration Act to all inventions, as the proper and only patent law, will promote undue litigation. It will probably be shown that in the working of the Ornamental Designs Act there are thousands of simple calico patterns claimed and registered every year as legal rights, by payment of one shilling, under penalties of 5*l.* to 30*l.* for infringement, recoverable in the simplest way on summons before a magis-

trate, and yet, that there have not been an average of twenty convictions a year during the creation of at least 50,000 patterns.

As to the time and cost of the proposed registrations, the report will probably recommend that each registration should be valid for one year and cost one pound; but that at the end of that year the inventor should be called upon to perfect his registration, and to deposit a copy of the article he has produced, or a sufficient model of it, where practicable, amending his first specification within reasonable limits, should he require or desire it. If his invention have proved useless, he will doubtless not complete a further registration, and his right will lapse. If he find it worth pursuing he will be glad to do so, and to pay a sufficient sum.—say 10*l.* for five years' right; 5*l.* for other five years' right; and, lastly, 20*l.* for a final extension of five years, when the right should altogether cease. The total cost of a patent of twenty-one years would thus be 36*l.* By this regulation it may be thought, an unerring test would be afforded of the value which the public and the inventor set on an invention; the inventor, on the one hand, becoming a perfectly truthful index of the use which the public make of his property, and the public, on the other, obtaining the speediest surrender of rights.

Many other points of importance will be considered in this report; and we are hopeful, although by many it is deemed too late, that a discussion of the whole question will not only be gone into, but produce some practical result in legislative enactment, in sufficient time to promote the interests of inventors in the Great Industrial Show of the year now close at hand.

## NOTES IN THE PROVINCES.

A MEMORIAL window has just been completed in the church of Great Waltham to the late Mrs. Tuffnell, of Langley. It is placed on the south side of the nave, and is composed of three lights cinque-foil headed, and the principal subjects are the Saviour in Glory, Virgin Mary, and Elizabeth. The work was done by Messrs. O'Connor. The cost, including repair of stonework, was 115*l.* This church contains another memorial window, erected in 1848 to the late Mr. Charles Dyer, architect.—On 7th inst. Waltham Church was reopened on its repair with increased accommodation. The nave has been lengthened, and open seats substituted for large square pews. The mouldings of arches and capitals, &c., have been restored, and several windows filled with stained glass. The exterior has also been repaired, the north wall of north aisle rebuilt, and the tower, &c., improved.—The Maidstone council have been called on by nearly 500 of the resident householders to erect public baths and washhouses in that town.—A new company is to apply to Parliament for an Act to build a pier, to be called "the Strand Pier, Quay, and Esplanade," to be erected near Ryde Castle, at the east of Ryde.—The chancel of Kingsthorpe Church, which was much decayed, has recently been, in great part, taken down and rebuilt, the roof raised, and an east window, designed by Mr. W. J. Douthorn, architect, inserted at the expense of the present incumbent.—A Hereford paper congratulates the citizens of Hereford on the improvements already effected, and also on the very extensive ones contemplated, with respect to their cathedral and its immediate vicinity, more especially in the cathedral-close itself. The unsightly paling or boarded barrier which has so long surrounded the structure is also now in course of removal; and it is said to be the intention of the Dean to summon to his aid a landscape gardener, for the purpose of putting the Cathedral-close in a proper state.—An important event has just taken place at Holyhead, in the final breaking-up and closing of her Majesty's dockyard establishment. This measure was carried out a few days ago, when all the mechanics and labourers hitherto engaged in the various departments of the dockyard were discharged.—Our paragraph as to Aberdare, a fortnight ago, said the proposed new church was begun. It is not, however, to be commenced till the spring. It is to accommodate 750 adults:—500 of the sittings are to be free. The site has been given by Lady Bute, with a

handsome subscription in addition. The population of Aberdare is now between 13,000 and 14,000; present church accommodation 175; not one sitting free. Schools have been lately built at the hamlet of Cwm Bach, and at the town of Aberdare, to instruct 300 children in the former, and 400 in the latter, and in each of which divine service is at present performed. Mr. Clive, M.P. for Worcester, has determined to erect a church on his estate, at Heolffelin, to meet the spiritual destitution of the locality adjoining, which schools are to be built immediately. A vicarage-house has been lately erected by the Rev. John Griffith, M.A., incumbent, which, with St. Elvan's church, Aberdare, and the schools at Cwm Bach, Aberdare town, and Heolffelin, are from the designs of Mr. A. Moseley.—During a recent discussion in the Sheffield Council as to supporting a design entertained by the guardians to erect their own gas works, and thus save, as estimated, no less than 100*l.* a year, at an outlay for works of 430*l.*, Mr. Groves, as reported by the local Times, "read a number of statements showing the cost of manufacturing gas at a number of private establishments. It appeared that at the West Riding house of correction at Wakefield, gas was made at a cost of 12*½d.* per 1,000 in 1849, and at 9*½d.* per 1,000 in the former half of 1850. He mentioned three private establishments in Sheffield at which gas is made at 1*½d.* per 1,000, including all expenses, 3*½d.* per 1,000, and less than half the price paid to any gas company." Messrs. George Wright and Co. of Liverpool, informed him that the canal coal used by the Liverpool Gas Company costs on an average 12*½d.* per ton. The price charged for gas is 4*½d.* per 1,000, coke selling with difficulty at 6*½d.* per ton. In Birmingham, where coal costs 11*½d.* per ton, the price is about to be charged 4*½d.* per 1,000, with a discount of 10 per cent. where the consumption exceeds 100,000 feet. At the Sheffield workhouse, from September 30th, 1849, to June 30th, 1850, 796,000 feet of gas was consumed; the cost for the first three quarters being 5*½d.* per 1,000, and for the last quarter 4*½d.*; total amount paid, 195*l.* 19*½d.*—Messrs. Loach, Wilson, and Bell, of the Walker Ironworks, at Newcastle, according to the *Journal of Gas Lighting*, have been contracted with by the New River Company for the supply of 1,500 tons of cast-iron pipes, thirty-six inches diameter, to be made on Stewart's principle. This house had the contract for some pipes of the same description recently supplied to the Great Central Gas Consumers' Company.—The ancient church of St. Saviour, Cockermouth, we regret to say, was destroyed by fire on Friday morning in last week. Scarcely anything but the walls and tower remain standing. The paintings in the church were destroyed. This church was enlarged and beautified in 1825, when 322 additional sittings were obtained, half of which were free and unappropriated, so that it could accommodate about 1,000 persons. The tower contains a peal of six bells, a clock, and chimes. The church was built on the site of the original chapel, which had a chantry, endowed in 1399 by Henry Percy, Earl of Northumberland. It is at present supposed that the fire was caused by some pipes which have just been laid in the chancel, to warm it through the winter.

ENLARGEMENT OF SMITHFIELD.—Application is to be made to Parliament in the ensuing session for an Act for enlarging the site of Smithfield market, and improving the approaches thereto; and for these purposes to take the land and buildings between Snow-hill on the south, King-street and West Smithfield on the south-east, Smithfield-bars on the east, Cowcross-street on the north, Turnmill-street on the east, Castle-street on the north, and Victoria-street on the west. It is also intended to take power to erect a dead meat market and slaughter-houses, and other buildings connected therewith, and to provide the same with all necessary conveniences, and to alter acts relating to market days, tolls, stallages, &c.—We may here also state that a similar application is to be made by the Inlington Cattle-market Company for an enlargement of that market, an incorporation of the company, and other purposes.